

## A POET'S CENTENARY.

A MONUMENT TO THE MEMORY OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

The Occasion Will Be More Generally Observed Than Was the Centenary of Lord Byron in 1838—A Monument Designed by Lady Shelley.

[Special Correspondence.]

ROCHESTER, N. Y., July 19.—The centenary of Percy Bysshe Shelley, which comes on the 4th of August of this year, will be of a different character from that of Lord Byron, which occurred in 1838. Could we have witnessed the great popularity of which Byron was the subject during his lifetime, and then been able to look forward and see how in less than 100 years his fame would have so declined that his centenary would pass without any public acknowledgment of his name in his native England, we would be strongly impressed with the vanity of all literary fame. Greece indeed honored Byron's centenary by a public celebration, but in doing so she honored, not the English poet, but the patriot who went to help her and to die in her service.

It can safely be predicted that Shelley's centenary will cause widespread interest. And not alone in England. America and Italy will join England in paying tribute to the memory of one of the greatest poets of this century. All the strange and sad story of his brief and romantic life will be once more reviewed, and in sorrow over his sudden and untimely fate the hearts of all will beat in sympathy.

Shelley enjoyed in life none of the popularity which distinguished Byron. At first he longed to play his part in the great political movements of the age, but his revolutionary and visionary ideas found little favor. Then the peculiar opinions which were the cause of his alienation from his family also tended to restrict his social influence. His great poems appeared at different times, but few heeded this sweet and impassioned singer until the voice grew silent, and then the world began by degrees to realize what a great and true poet it had been neglecting so long.

The interest which began soon after his death to center in Shelley has been naturally intensified by the pathetic nature of the tragedy which overwhelmed him at the last. But Shelley's fame cannot be said to be dependent upon either outward incident or upon personal magnetism, or even upon the unique qualities of his poetical work. English political and religious thought began to assume new aspects as the years passed. The poetry which Shelley had written in obscurity began to arouse enthusiasm, for it expressed many of the ideas which were now becoming more popular. It is true that many of the social reforms which Shelley proposed have never been and doubtless never will be adopted by the world. And it is well that this is the case. But as men's minds began to be emancipated more and more from bigotry, cant and intolerance they perceived the truth that was in Shelley, while at the same time they could reject that which was false and pernicious in his theories. They saw, too, that Shelley had not written for his own age, but like the true prophet that he was he had written for the future.

Then, also, the same causes which brought England around to Wordsworth brought all lovers of nature to trust in the spiritual representation of nature in the work of Shelley; while his imaginative grasp and fervor, his enthusiasm for high and noble ideals and the witchery of his music have brought delight to a constantly increasing number of readers.

Shelley's fame has therefore grown in about the same proportion as that of Byron has declined. When in the nineteenth century criticism turned back to the Nineteenth century and reviewed all the different phases which its glorious literature has assumed, it will be found that of the great men whose work has won an abiding place in the world Percy Bysshe Shelley will rank among the first.

At this centennial time Lady Shelley, by whose proud and affectionate efforts so much has been done to vindicate the poet and to furnish his different biographers authentic information, will feel that she is indeed receiving the reward of all her loving service when she sees how fully the world responds to the magnetism of the poet who, though dead these seventy long years, yet speaks to men and sways them by his genius.

Though Shelley has never been honored by a place in Westminster Abbey, there is nevertheless a fine monument to his memory on consecrated ground. In the south of Hampshire, nearly opposite the Isle of Wight, is the old town of Christchurch. In its parish church, one of the finest speci-



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

mens of Norman architecture in England, there is a noble monument to Shelley. It represents Mary Shelley supporting the body of the poet just as it has been cast upon the shore. A boat near recalls vividly the sad tragedy which can never be forgotten. On the monument's base are three immortal lines from Adonais in which Shelley seems to have prefigured his own condition even more than that of his friend Keats:

He has outsteered the shadow of our night, etc. In the churchyard of Bournemouth, a seaport town only five miles distant, repose the remains of Mary Shelley, beside those of her father, William Godwin, and her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Here are the portraits of the poet which have been the basis of the numerous photographs which are familiar to all. There is a fine picture, too, of Mary Shelley. Here are notebooks, autographs, locks of hair and many priceless mementoes. The house contains also a monument like that in Christchurch.

Sir Percy, son of the poet, lived a long and happy life, quite different from the restless, troubled career of his father. He inherited some of the finest qualities of his

illustrious parents, was earnest, straightforward, affectionate and sincere, fond of literature, fond of yachting, a good neighbor, a good landlord and husband. He died only a short time ago. No children have ever blessed his home. Lady Shelley is a beautiful, charming and intellectual woman and has always been an enthusiast over Shelley and Shelley's poetry. Even in the grief and retirement of her widowhood her interest in everything pertaining to him has never relaxed. She has lately put the crown upon all her previous labors on behalf of his fame by designing a monument which will indeed be worthy of his exalted genius.

The monument by Weeks in Christchurch has never fully satisfied her. The desire of her heart has been to place over the poet's grave at Rome a better, a nobler work of art. Over a year ago she and the eminent artist, Onslow Ford, consulted and planned together, and the result has even exceeded her most ardent hopes. This monument was to have been placed this year over the spot in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, whither Trelawny conveyed the ashes of the poet.

This was found impracticable, however, and Lady Shelley has offered it to the University of Oxford. The grave has during these seventy years been covered by a small marble stone, on which is Leigh Hunt's simple inscription and the lines added by Trelawny from The Tempest:

Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea change  
Into something rich and strange.

The cypresses Trelawny planted have now grown to a height of over sixty feet. Over the grave wild violets are ever in bloom, and acacia leaves mingle lovingly with the grass upon it. I always think of Shelley's own beautiful words when he spoke of the violets and daisies near the grave of Keats, "It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place."



MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY.

The monument designed by Lady Shelley combines many of the noblest qualities of ancient Greek art with all the "impassioned humanity of the modern spirit." The whole design shows life, grace, majesty and power. On a slab lies the body of the poet, just as he has been rescued from death. His hair is as though wet with the water, and as he lies there with his right arm flung across his breast his head has fallen as if by accident upon a laurel branch which "springs to arch itself above the brow."

Underneath each end of the slab on which the body of the poet rests are two lions with outstretched wings, and in front of the pedestal there is seated an "exquisite muse, who, bending slightly forward, seems to be listening for the last dying echoes of sound from her silver lyre unstrung." The purest white marble is the material of the upper portion of this monument, the winged lions and the muse are made of bronze, and various rare and costly marbles will be used in other parts of this well nigh perfect work of art.

We have not left ourselves space to speak of what the admirers of Percy Bysshe Shelley are planning to do in England in commemoration of his centenary. The Shelley society of London is full of enthusiasm, and with this enthusiasm are mingled many sad feelings of regret and loss. Impressive ceremonies will be held at Via Regia, on the very spot where Shelley's body was burned in the presence of Trelawny, Byron and Leigh Hunt. The Roman sculptor, Luchessi, has designed a monument to be there erected.

KENTON WEST.

[Special Correspondence.]

BINGHAMTON, N. Y., July 19.—The intrepidity of Thomas Milan, whose name Governor Flower is now considering for the position of railroad commissioner, is illustrated in the following incident: It was several years ago when Tom was running a passenger engine on the Ulster branch of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western. His train with a coach containing several railroad officials left the Binghamton depot ten minutes late. The cause of this delay, whether just or otherwise, had been laid at Tom's door, and before pulling out of the station a severe reprimand had been administered by one of the officers. Tom's only reply was, as he set his teeth, "We will pull into Norwich on time." A short distance west of Oxford, as the train was running forty miles an hour, the tire on one of the drive wheels broke with the report of a gun. Outside of the engine cab none knew of the accident, but the fireman and head brakeman turned pale with fear, the former wanting to jump. Tom replied, "Keep your seat, you damned fool, we're all right," but never slackened speed.

Bang! bang! sounded the broken tire as each revolution struck the rail, and Tom, his head out the window, one eye on the flange, the other on the rail, plunged ahead. Oxford was reached and the train stopped for water. The station master seeing the situation implored Tom to sidetrack till another engine could be procured, but he refused.

As the train again pulled out the directors became aware of the difficulty and the brakeman was sent forward with a message from the irascible individual who had "read the riot act" to Tom a short time previously, asking him to slow up. No attention was paid the request, Tom crowding on more steam, and every bang of the broken tire sending a cold chill down the directors' backs. It was just two minutes ahead of the scheduled time when the train pulled into Norwich, and as the engine halted at the station Tom shouted to the conductor: "Say I tell that old fool in the rear coach we're on time and that I always keep my word."

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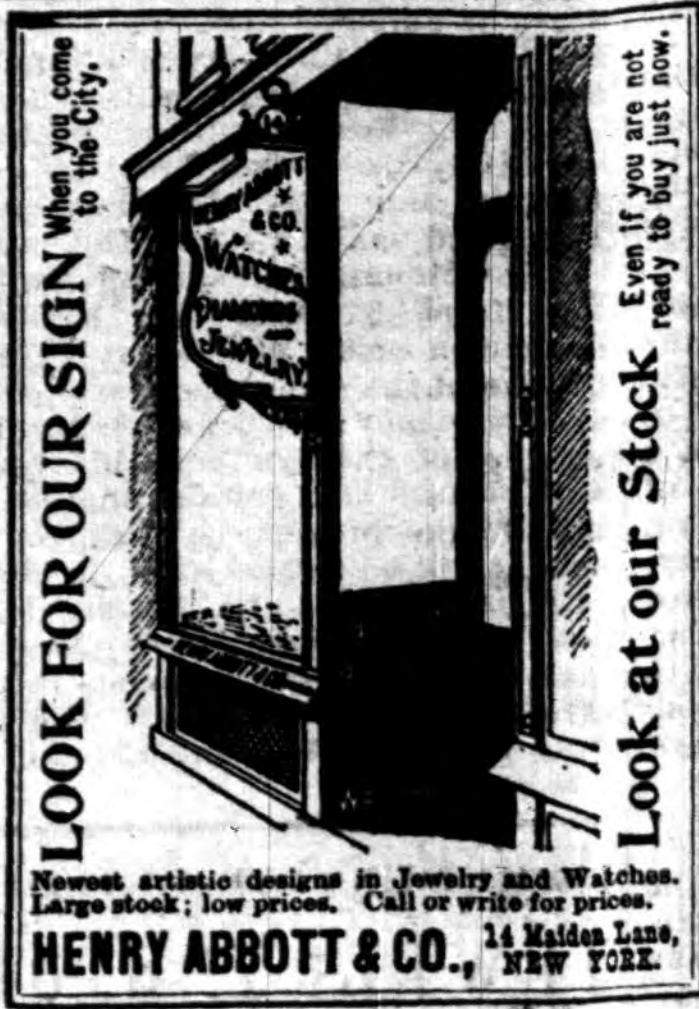
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